



Common Drinking Water Quality Concerns



This fact sheet addresses some of the more common questions about discolored or cloudy water and the aesthetics related to drinking water quality on JBER. At times, drinking water can have an unpleasant odor, taste, or appearance. These aesthetic characteristics usually don't pose a public health threat and, in most cases, they don't last long. While primary standards regulate the health and safety of drinking water, secondary standards cover the aesthetic qualities (the things that make it appealing to the senses; i.e. taste, odor, cloudiness/color) of drinking water. The EPA National Primary Drinking Water Regulations identify Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels, including aesthetic qualities, as non-mandatory water quality standards because contaminants in this category are not considered to present a risk to human health.

Potential Causes of Aesthetic Issues:

New Water Source: A new water source, such as a reservoir, river, or well can give the water different qualities which can affect the color, odor, and/or taste of your water.

Organic Material: Dirt and other naturally occurring sediments can and do settle at the bottom of water supply lines and/or storage.

Pipe Material: When galvanized pipes corrode over time, rust and other pipe materials flake off into the water.

Air: Extra air trapped in or moving through water can give it a cloudy or milky white appearance.

Disruptions in the System: Discolored, abnormal smelling, and/or abnormal tasting water can be the result of controlled and uncontrolled events in the distribution system including regular maintenance, water line breaks, fire hydrant use, water main flushing, and natural disasters. When these events occur, sediment in water lines or storage sometimes get stirred up due to the changes in the flow of water in the mains. Though these events are temporary and in most cases harmless and not considered a health threat, these sediments and conditions might cause changes of your water.

<u>Green/Blue Water:</u> Usually caused by corrosion of copper plumbing. If corrosion is occurring, dripping water will leave a bluish-green stain.	<u>Cloudy/Milky White Water:</u> Usually caused by tiny air bubbles typically introduced into the water distribution system by maintenance activities and water pressure changes. Fill a clear glass with water and set it on the counter for several minutes. If the water starts to clear from the bottom of the glass upwards, the cloudy or white appearance is trapped air.
<u>Dark Brown/Black Water:</u> Usually caused by corrosion of the water pipe as materials flake away.	<u>Brown/Red/Orange/Yellow Water:</u> Usually caused by iron rust (galvanized iron, steel, or cast iron pipes when water is left to sit over a period of time).

What you should do: Run/flush the cold water from your tap(s) for approximately 15 minutes and flush toilet(s). Repeat, as necessary. Remember to consider the hot water heater if it has been sitting unused for an extended period of time.

Where can I get more information: For general information or questions about JBER drinking water quality, contact Doyon Utilities site management office at (907) 338-3600, JBER 673d Bioenvironmental Engineering Flight at (907) 384-3985, JBER Housing Maintenance, or online at the EPA website <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/secondary-drinking-water-standards-guidance-nuisance-chemicals>.

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